

# RESIDENTS' ASSEMBLY ON DATA AND AI INNOVATION EVALUATION

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July 2025

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*"It's our civic duty to make data work for people" (stakeholder)*

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A report for CDC  
Liverpool City  
Region Civic  
Data  
Cooperative

## Contents

1	Executive Summary .....	2
2	Introduction.....	3
2.1	Citizen Assembly methodology.....	3
2.2	Evaluation methodology .....	4
2.3	Theory of Change .....	5
2.4	Evaluation framework .....	6
3	Design & set-up .....	6
3.1	Question and framing .....	7
3.2	Involving stakeholders .....	9
3.3	Consideration of inclusion in design .....	11
3.4	Sessions designed to lead to usable charter .....	14
3.5	Other learning.....	15
4	Delivery.....	16
4.1	Time and space to deliberate / learn .....	17
4.2	Information provided is balanced / presents different viewpoints .....	18
4.3	Participants all feel that they have a voice / are heard .....	19
4.4	Adaptability of team in response to feedback.....	20
4.5	Participants and stakeholders remain engaged across Assembly duration.....	20
4.6	Participant privacy protected as agreed .....	20
4.7	Other learning.....	21
5	Impact.....	23
5.1	Stakeholders sign charter, attend meetings & demonstrate increased understanding .....	23
5.2	Assembly members & wider public clear how their input has informed the charter .....	23
5.3	Routes to impact identified (including harnessing participants & keeping them informed) ...	24
5.4	Other impacts .....	25
5.5	Looking to the future .....	26
6	Lessons learned .....	29
7	Conclusions.....	30
	Appendix 1: Evaluation Framework.....	31
7.1	Design .....	31
7.2	Delivery .....	32
7.3	Impact .....	33
	Appendix 2: Analysis of postcard exercise.....	34

## 1 Executive Summary

Overall the Liverpool Residents' Assembly on Data and AI Innovation was very successful. The series of four full day events, preceded by a short online warm-up session took participants through a series of exercises so that by Day 4 they could generate a Charter for AI and data use in the Liverpool City Region. The final charter has 11 principles, which participants are confident broadly reflect the feelings of the people who were in the room. If upheld, the participants felt the Charter would achieve the objective of making AI and data use in the city region more trustworthy and beneficial.

It therefore did the job it set out to do, and the stakeholders and residents involved were very positive about the experience. The high level of professionalism, warmth and care from the team shone through, instantly making people feel comfortable regardless of their initial level of knowledge and understanding. Over the course of the four days of activities, participants grew in their understanding and confidence, and were proud of the Charter they developed as a result.

Despite initial concerns, the team managed to achieve a good spread of people in the room, from all different walks of life. The demographic quotas were met, although there were fewer people with no knowledge of AI or significant concerns about AI than might have been expected. The risk of this influencing the outcome was mitigated by ensuring people with low knowledge and who were uncertain if AI would be positive or negative were over-represented, ensuring the proportion who started most positive were in line with the general public as a whole. After the four days, the room became more polarised, with most people becoming more positive about the potential for AI to have a positive impact on society.

The success of the Assembly was in a large part due to the heroic efforts of the core design and delivery team. A slightly larger team would have ensured better resilience and a more manageable workload, especially in the run up to the events. Nonetheless, from a participant perspective everything went very smoothly and they felt there was very little that could be improved upon.

It can be difficult for academic researchers to gain traction for their work and ensure real-world impact. This evaluation found that the involvement of the university attracted participants and gave them confidence in the process. The steps taken to involve the signatory organisations throughout the process helped ensure that they were willing to sign up at the end and ultimately has set the Charter up for success.

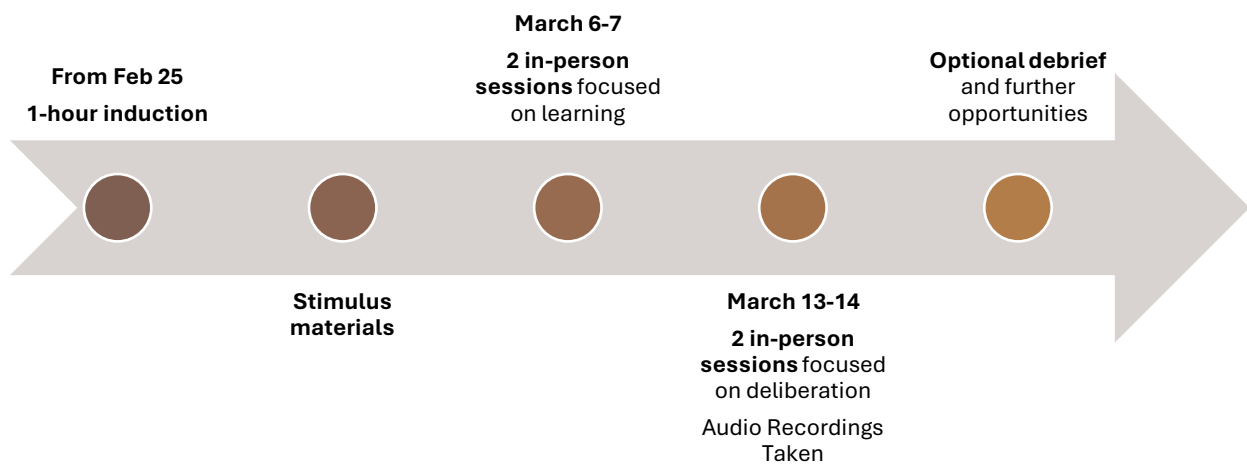
The next challenge for the team will be following up the launch of the Charter and building momentum and buy-in from people in the region, from data owners through to frontline staff to encourage them to use it and promote it through their work. As no single organisation 'owns' the Charter, it will be up to the individual signatories to hold themselves, and the other signatories to account. The Charter will have most value if participants and wider residents see that the principles are being upheld, although it is important to note that through the process of getting signatories to read the principles it is likely the Charter will have an instrumental value – making sure people running projects are thinking carefully about how to ensure their project is trustworthy.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Citizen Assembly methodology

Figure 1 below shows the journey that participants in the Citizen Assembly followed. The project itself commenced in September 2024, with an official launch in November 2024 to raise awareness with wider stakeholders. This time was necessary to agree the appropriate question to pose to the Assembly, and to design the sessions and necessary stimulus and speakers. It was also required to gain ethics approval which took longer than anticipated.

**Figure 1: Assembly process**



Recruitment was undertaken by the Sortition Foundation. They sent a mailout to 21,000 households in the Liverpool City Region in mid-January 2025. A postcard reminder was sent to 33% of the households as an experiment to see whether it would improve the response rate and the costs and benefits of doing so (see Appendix 2 below). Participants were randomly selected from the responses to achieve a mix of people based on demographic and attitudinal information collected. They were confirmed 2.5 weeks before the Assembly started.

The sessions were as follows:

**Figure 2: Assembly session contents**

Session	Purpose
<b>Induction (1 hour, online or telephone)</b>	Introduce the Assembly, provide joining instructions and ensure people were confident that the process was legitimate (not a scam)
<b>Stimulus materials</b>	Participants were provided with some links in advance. They were not expected or required to read these, but if they wanted to learn a little about AI before attending these resources were made available to them.
<b>Learning days (Days 1 and 2)</b>	Opportunity to meet the organisations likely to sign the Charter (the NHS, Combined Authority and University) and to learn about AI. Day 1

	<p>included presentations from the 3 organisations, an introduction to AI and a knowledge safari where participants went to four different 'stations' to find out about work already underway in the city region.</p> <p>Day 2 was hosted by Careful Industries and included a second (less technical) introduction to AI and table discussions of potential benefits and harms and a session to design a new AI or data project for the city region.</p>
<b>Deliberation days (Days 3 and 4)</b>	<p><b><i>At the start of day 3, on the advice of the evaluators, groups were mixed with half the people staying on the same table, and half moving to a new table.</i></b></p> <p>Day 3 included a presentation about potential risks and harms. Then time working in small groups to think about the issues and different perspectives not in the room. Participants discussed examples of other charters and starting to develop their own principles.</p> <p>Day 4 started with further discussion of principles. These were developed and iterated and finally shared with the room. During lunch, the Chair reviewed the principles that had been developed c.80, and grouped them by theme, reducing it to c.40 and then, after further work, to 22. In the afternoon participants individually ranked these 22 using software. The final session involved designing a Banner as a straightforward and rewarding task at the end of the process.</p>
<b>Optional debrief (2 hours online/telephone)</b>	<p>After getting initial feedback from the steering group, and spending more time undertaking analysis, this session was to get any further input into the Charter principles after they had been refined.</p>

## 2.2 Evaluation methodology

This independent evaluation report seeks to capture feedback and learning from the CDC Residents Assembly on Data and AI Innovation. It draws on several strands of data and evidence:

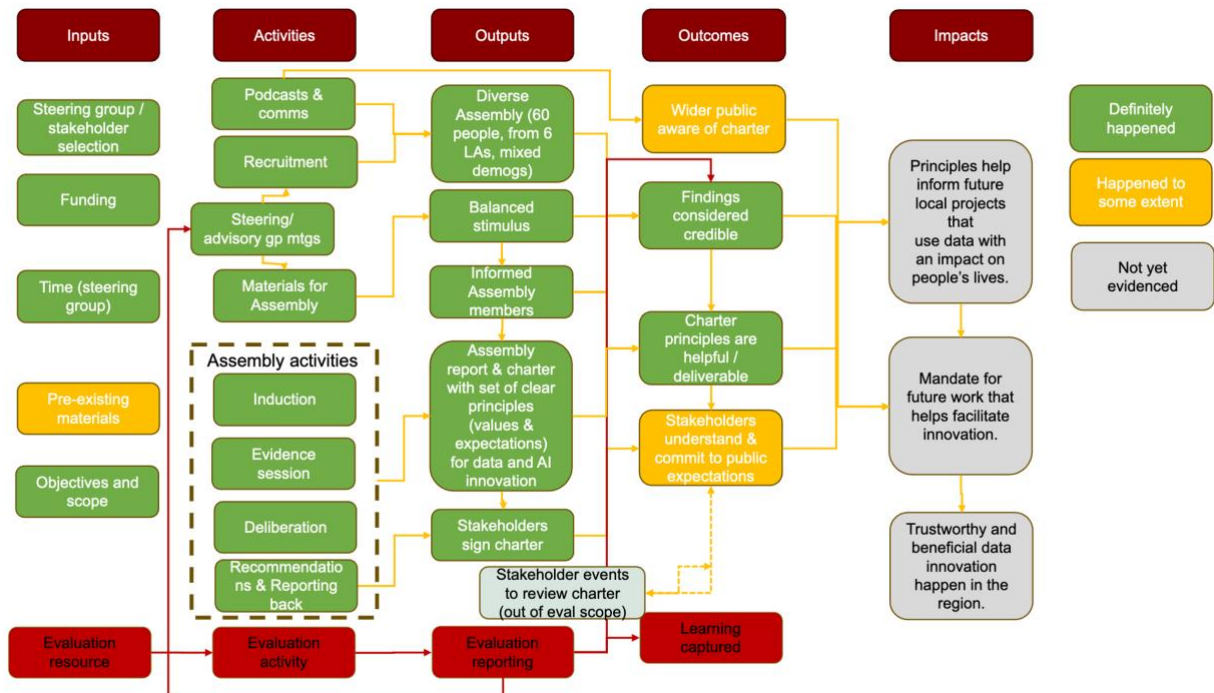
- An anonymous survey distributed by CDC to stakeholders including people who participated in the launch event (which received 8 responses) in November 2024
- Four participant surveys (after pre-call, after day 2, after day 4 and after the debrief)
- Nine online (Zoom) interviews with 10 stakeholders (one paired interview) in November/December 2024 and five online interviews conducted in April 2025. Additional opportunities for interviews were offered to the participants in the final survey but none chose to provide their contact details.
- 19 interviews and a similar number of ad-hoc conversations with participants conducted over the course of the Assembly and ten interviews conducted online / by telephone after the Assembly
- Observations of meetings and discussions with the CDC team throughout the duration of the project

The approach to this evaluation is designed to be 'no surprises' so much of the feedback included has already been actioned. The purpose of this report is to capture the learning for future events.

## 2.3 Theory of Change

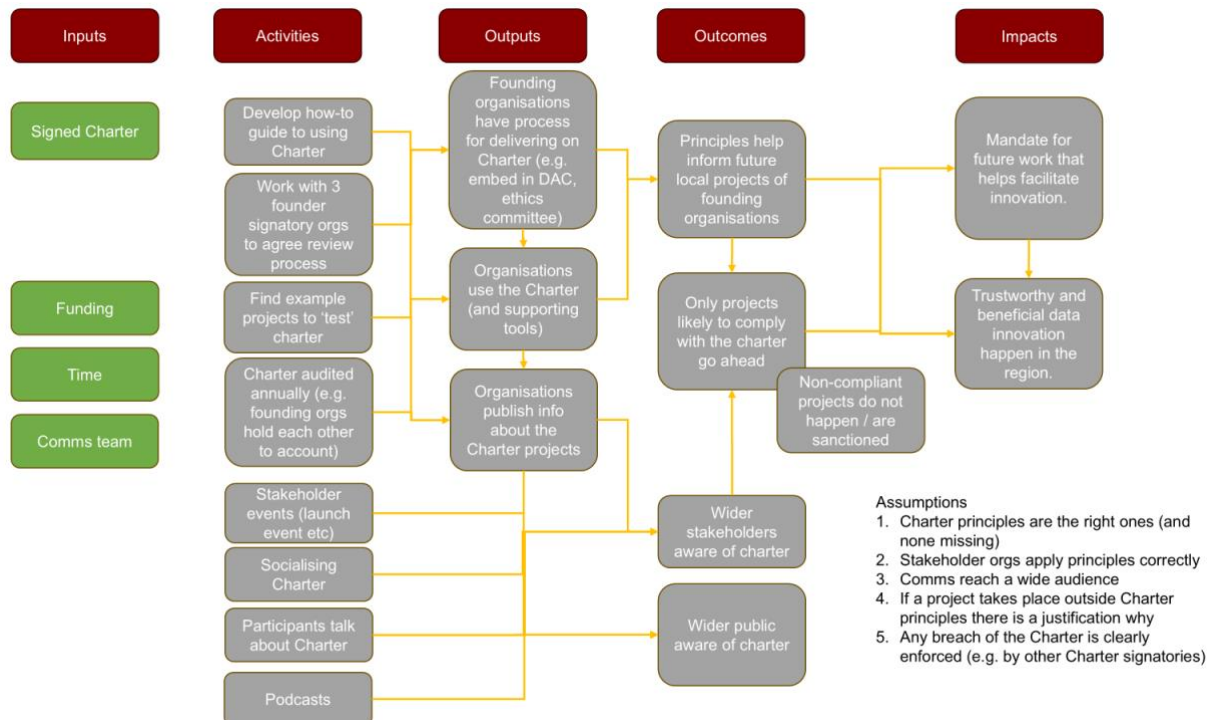
The evaluation framework has been designed around a Theory of Change for the Assembly, developed in conjunction with the CDC team. The theory of change is set out below. Elements coloured green have definitely occurred, elements coloured amber have been evidenced to some extent and those in grey had not yet been delivered at the time of this evaluation report.

**Figure 3: Logic Model outlining Theory of Change for the Assembly**



This theory of change stops at the point the charter is delivered as this is where the evaluation ends. However, as outlined below, stakeholders are keen to understand the theory of change beyond production of the charter, so a second model has been developed to show what happens after the Charter is published. It will be important to review progress against this second model once the Charter has had time to embed.

**Figure 4: Logic Model outlining Theory of Change for the Charter**



## 2.4 Evaluation framework

The Theory of Change for the Assembly led to the development of an evaluation framework (see Appendix 1). This report is structured around the evaluation framework, answering each question posed in turn before concluding with the main lessons learned (chapter 6). The Theory of Change for the Charter could form the basis of an evaluation framework if required. The team are also producing a self-audit framework to support teams aiming to use the Charter.

## 3 Design & set-up

The framework sets out four themes for the evaluation to explore:

- Clear, well-defined (and balanced) question / scope / framing
- Appropriate stakeholders involved
- Consideration of inclusion & representation in design / recruitment
- Sessions designed to lead to usable charter

Each of these themes is discussed in more detail below.

Before the Assembly, stakeholders were broadly satisfied with the plans for the Assembly. A few had concerns and their reasons related to the overall design, which was perceived to be too time-intensive and difficult to attend for the majority of people, thus potentially undermining its credibility. The team worked hard to address this concern as outlined in the final report. There was also a concern that the Charter could be very risk averse, limiting the level of innovation that is possible in the region and not fully considering the risk of not embracing the opportunities ahead. This risk did not materialise.

**Figure 5: Design and set-up key learning**

What worked well?	What could be improved?
✓ Senior stakeholders were engaged from the start and saw the value of the work	❖ While difficult to arrange in a small team, having more than one person involved in the detail of the design process would have made the approach more resilient
✓ The team were committed to making the sessions a success and had the skills, knowledge and experience to design a suitable process	❖ The evaluator did not attend any speaker briefings, but the way the speakers approached their presentations suggested a more in-depth approach to preparation could have been valuable including locking down slides and speeches in advance
✓ The team gave careful consideration to how to be inclusive and encourage diversity within the design constraints	❖ The agenda for Day 2 was only finalised after Day 1, which made it more challenging for the facilitators to prepare
✓ Outsourcing task of explaining what AI is to a professional who could do this well and in an engaging manner	❖ Exercise closer control over outsourced elements to ensure everyone is very clear on their role and how it fits in the bigger picture / wider structure

### 3.1 Question and framing

Overall stakeholders and the public were comfortable with the framing of the Summit Questions:

*“What does trustworthy and beneficial data and AI innovation look like for the Liverpool City Region?”*

*“How should residents, policymakers, and experts work together to ensure the Liverpool City Region makes trustworthy and beneficial data innovation a reality?”*

#### 3.1.1 Feedback on the questions

The questions for the Assembly are considered by stakeholders to be well timed, relevant and interesting, with many different organisations interested to hear the answers. Concerns raised in the scoping phase were mitigated during delivery.

**Figure 6: Concerns and mitigations about questions**

Concern	Mitigation	Outcome
<b>Question does not specify who should benefit</b>	Discussion of principles was broad and allowed participants to explore this.	The idea of benefit for the city region came out strongly in the Charter
<b>Ensuring red lines are captured and benefits are discussed</b>	Exercises to discuss the potential benefits were included in the agenda	The principles include both red lines and aspirations for how data and AI are used



<b>Ensure that the outputs are future-proof / not focussed on specific projects</b>	Ensuring space and time to consider both specific projects and general principles	Although project examples were used the Charter is applicable across a wide range of projects
<b>Ensure the Assembly captures insight into what uses people would like AI to be involved in</b>	Specific exercises addressed this question	The final write-up captures the ideas participants developed on their tables
<b>Ensure the charter considers the wide variety of data sources (not just public sector)</b>	The framing of the sessions was intentionally broad so the origin of the data was not explicitly considered	The Charter did not explicitly consider different data sources, although participants had the opportunity to take them out of scope if they wanted to

Overall, the questions worked well. The Chair reminded participants of the questions at the start of every session and participants were able to describe in reasonable detail the purpose of the Assembly. Both participants and stakeholders agreed that if the Charter principles are followed data and AI innovation will potentially be trustworthy and beneficial, although there was also some general scepticism among participants about whether the principles will really be adhered to and how that will be monitored. Also, some participants were concerned that as this is a new, emerging technology they might have missed some issues which will only become apparent as the technology is used more widely. This was perceived to be inevitable, and not a criticism of the approach or the Charter as developed.

### 3.1.2 Including tangible examples & building on past learning

Across the process stakeholders were keen to see that the participants are challenged to consider a wide range of tangible applications. The agenda allowed for this and over the course of the Assembly participants learned about a wide range of examples, although their discussion of AI remained at quite a high level and did not differentiate between different forms of AI (i.e. pattern matching vs generative).

The main approach to sharing examples was through the 'knowledge safari' at the end of the first full day. However, each project was introduced differently and, in part due to the room layout<sup>1</sup>, some participants struggled to hear or engage with the examples provided. Examples of more controversial uses of AI were not introduced until Day 3 and were not discussed in depth. Similarly, the 5 safes were mentioned and were well received (to the extent they were mentioned in the Charter) but not to the extent that people had the opportunity to interrogate exactly what they meant or how they should be interpreted in a Liverpool specific context.

The decision to introduce examples of principles from other exercises on Day 3 helped participants think about what they would like to see in their Charter. While some participants found this very useful and reassuring, others expressed some concerns that these examples led them in a particular direction and were concerned that they were relying too much on what other people had said before. On review, the final Charter statements reflected some of these principles but also drew in ideas and discussions from other sessions. For example, the final statements include some detail on what it means to be

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<sup>1</sup> This exercise involved people moving around to four corners of the room. However, tables and chairs were in the way meaning some groups struggled to get close to the relatively small posters. Additionally, some participants were not always sure where they were supposed to be and some 'got lost' between the stations. This worked better where the group facilitator stayed with them and guided them to the right place.

trustworthy – there is more on accountability, governance and oversight than in the examples that were provided. Equally, some ideas including purpose limitation were discussed but did not make it explicitly into the final principles. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that while the examples were helpful, they were not leading and did not unduly influence the final Charter outputs.

### 3.1.3 Getting the framing right

Some stakeholders discussed the importance of the framing of the sessions. Initially the concern was that when developing the Charter people might not recognise the role algorithms already play and might effectively propose a step backwards to human only decision-making. On the day, the positive attitudes of the speakers on Day 1 meant this fear was not realised.

Another question was whether the City Region was a meaningful geography for people. During the creative (Banner making) exercise on the final day there were discussions of how to ensure that the final output was not Liverpool centric, but overall it was not clear from the table discussions whether the chosen level of geography was important to participants. In the post-event interviews, generally participants thought it was helpful to focus on the City Region, although some reflected that they felt the other Charters they saw showed that there were similar concerns from people across the world. Nonetheless, they appreciated the event had been carried out in the City Region.

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*“I believe that conducting this with a focus on the Liverpool City Region helps residents to build confidence in that the north of the country, and specifically this city, is still having time and dedication invested in it, and that people care to help develop further.” (Participant)*

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Finally, stakeholders emphasised the importance of maintaining trust by being honest about what is, and what is not, in scope for change. It was important to be clear what the Charter could influence, but also what it cannot. Participants needed to feel that they can influence something in order for the sessions to be meaningful, but if they were given unrealistic expectations this would harm future efforts to engage. The team were aware of this challenge, and worked hard to get this balance right. The public feedback suggests that the majority of people were happy with their scope of influence and felt that the charter would have a positive impact. As discussed below, the fact that all three organisations committed to taking forward the principles from the charter suggest that the framing was appropriate.

## 3.2 Involving stakeholders

The evaluation focussed on people who were involved or who are aware of the plans for the Assembly. The Assembly team worked with a number of steering groups / advisory groups to help shape the Assembly with relevant input. These included:

- **Core steering group:** consisting of senior leaders from main project stakeholders (Combined authority, NHS, University of Liverpool, CDC) who oversaw the project delivery at a strategic level and who currently met monthly. This group provided high level advice and guidance throughout and participated in the Assembly as speakers.
- **Stakeholder committee:** consisting of additional organisations and individuals who are interested in data and AI innovation in the region which met 4 times to provide challenge and support. These meetings were well chaired, followed a set of slides to guide the session and resulted in constructive feedback the team were able to action.
- **Community Of Practice on inclusive data stewardship** – experts on data stewardship, and people ‘doing the doing’, heard a presentation about the planned Assembly and had the

opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. Limited changes were required as a result of this interaction.

- **PPIE for NHS data interaction** – saw a high-level presentation and provided high level feedback. Equally, the NHS PPIE Organisational Group who run PPIE in the region provided high level feedback. Two public advisors reviewed all materials and provided high level feedback which was focussed on process, e.g. how to keep people involved and engaged.

The November launch event was relatively well attended by people from a range of different organisations. Generally, the people who attended suggested it was attractive to people looking to be able to access more data in the future, who hoped this would help unlock known issues within the region. As such they were positive and supportive of the approach, but were conscious of the people who were not necessarily there (see 3.2.1 below).

Over time, attendance at the core steering group has varied due to other time commitments. A few stakeholders felt that this reflected their confidence that the process was headed in the right direction, and a desire not to micromanage. They reflected that the core group is relatively senior, and other people might be better placed to support the workday to day. It was noted that some of the challenges the project has are outside the control of the team (e.g. linking to other ongoing projects), and that over time the plans to develop clearer strategic leadership in the region should help. This high level of trust potentially led to those also acting as speakers appearing underprepared at times during the Assembly.

The evaluation has not received any feedback from the Community of Practice or the PPIE group – they were invited to participate in the survey but did not respond. Although a survey was sent out after the launch event it only received three responses (and these were from participants in the Assembly) which is unfortunate.

### 3.2.1 Which stakeholders to involve?

The main organisations involved in the project are well represented, but there were suggestions for other organisations or types of people/roles who would ideally need to be brought into the project so that they would feel bought in. Some stakeholders focussed on the need to bring on board people who are less passionate about data sharing, or who have concerns about the applications of AI. Equally, some suggested involving more people who would be helpful for sharing the Charter and building buy-in, who might not currently have strong opinions either way.

The table below sets out the different types of people who were suggested by stakeholders during the set-up phase:

**Figure 7: Suggested experts to involve**

Technical experts	Leaders	'On the ground'
Tech companies / software engineers working in the region	Chief executives of hospitals & council, elected members (council, MP, mayor) etc	People with lived experience / who can share insight on accessibility including community organisations
Lawyers	Data owners / controllers (e.g. in education, GPs) who are currently reticent about sharing	People involved in gathering data (who need to explain why they are doing so / reassure) including frontline staff

The team took this feedback on board and broadened their stakeholder engagement approach to include a company working in AI in the city region. They also worked with Careful Industries to bring external challenge and balance to the Assembly sessions, which was well received by Assembly participants.

During the Assembly, the evaluators noted that the sessions might have benefited from stakeholders who could effectively communicate the strengths and weaknesses of data protection legislation and GDPR and the five safes. These appeared in the final outputs but it is unclear that these concepts were well understood, beyond the high-level assurances they provided. The Chair stepped in on Day 3 to provide some information on these concepts, as well as to share more examples of where AI and data might not be trustworthy, but ideally a different person would have done this to maintain the Chair's independence from the content.

Overall, the participants were confident that they had heard from a wide range of views and that their questions had been answered. Over half strongly agreed the speakers they heard from helped inform their recommendations, and thought the information was balanced; nobody disagreed<sup>2</sup>.

### **3.3 Consideration of inclusion in design**

Diversity and inclusion are a key concern of the team, and also of stakeholders. Any piece of engagement will have strengths and weaknesses, and it is never the case that one size will fit all. A couple of stakeholders in the survey indicated that if the process was not sufficiently inclusive they would not be comfortable endorsing the findings, suggesting that only relying on people who could make a 5-day, face-to-face commitment would not result in a Charter that reflects the views of the people of Liverpool City Region. The team put in place measures to mitigate the risks of missing voices as discussed below. On balance, the evaluators and participants were satisfied that there was a diversity of voices in the room.

#### **3.3.1 Time requirement of participants**

The nature of the questions will require participants to dedicate a substantial amount of their time in order to build a good understanding of the topic and to enable meaningful deliberation. However, this requirement for people to find the time will mean that a significant number of people will automatically be excluded from participating as they will not have the time to dedicate to the exercise (e.g. people in education, parents and carers, people in full time work etc).

The proposal to run a shorter process online in parallel did not happen due to resource constraints and unfortunately the key evidence sessions were not recorded. The team did work to bring in voices that might not be represented through stimulus materials (see below).

The team considered different options, including running the events at the weekend (but this was not considered feasible as the venue could not accommodate it and stakeholders were less likely to be available) or in evenings (but this would have necessitated a hybrid approach with online and face to face as otherwise it would be too intensive in terms of travel time). On balance, the team decided to stick to the original proposal, acknowledging that it would not work for everyone, but also noting that there is some precedent where citizens juries have run mid-week in the past. A couple of participants mentioned that the financial incentive was sufficiently high that they might have considered taking time off work to take part, although those particular individuals had not needed to do so.

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<sup>2</sup> 30/52 strongly agree, 21 agree "The speakers we've heard from helped inform the development of our recommendations" and 29/52 strongly agree, 21 agree "The information we've received was fair and balanced and reflected different viewpoints"

### 3.3.2 Accessibility for those who did attend

Again, there was no single solution which would make the events accessible, but instead the team implemented a number of measures. The team offered a pre-meeting for all the participants, to help make them more comfortable, building an understanding of what would happen and to gather insight into what additional needs should be taken into account. The following issues were raised in the interviews with stakeholders:

- **Languages:** The team are already committed to providing translation in two important languages for the city (Polish and Arabic) and the invite was designed to reflect this. On the day, nobody requested translation and no participants said they had difficulty understanding when asked. However, at times a couple of participants for whom English was not their first language looked disengaged during both presentations and the discussions, suggesting they had some difficulty participating fully, although were comfortable that their views were broadly reflected.
- **Disability:** The venue was accessible (with a lift), parking and was accessible by public transport. Stakeholders also suggested offering Easy Read options, or signing for the Deaf, and recommended reaching out to community leaders to understand what barriers would need to be overcome. However, this was not possible within the budget and time available.
- **Financial:** Stakeholders emphasised the importance of ensuring people had money in advance to cover travel costs for the face-to-face sessions. As a result of the design with the initial onboarding happening mostly online, the first payments were made before the first face to face session meaning this should not be an issue. Some people requested physical vouchers or wanted their travel paid for directly and the team did so when asked.
- **Creche:** Additionally, the team explored the option of providing creche facilities, although in the end these were not required (parents relied on their usual childcare arrangements such as leaving children with their extended family).
- **Confidence & Trust:** Having the confidence to volunteer is also a potential barrier. The team took steps including arranging for a reminder postcard to be sent to some households and ensuring there was information about the Assembly on the university website. Some participants noted to the evaluators that this provided them with reassurance the request to participate was legitimate. Additionally, stakeholders offered the option of using neighbourhood managers to promote the opportunity, and using their expertise to understand how to engage particular communities. However, due to delays in recruitment commencing this option was not taken up.
- **Employment:** The team offered to provide letters to employers if people wanted to request time off work. A couple of the participants took up this offer.
- **Religion:** Stakeholders mentioned the importance of considering faith group special days (alongside school holidays) when deciding on the dates. As a result of the delays due to ethics approval the Assembly took place during Ramadan and so the team ensured a prayer room was available.
- **Other reasonable adjustments:** No other adjustments were requested by participants in advance. Some requested physical copies of slides and these were available during the second week. A quiet room was offered throughout with sensory toys available.

An overwhelming message from all the participants the evaluators spoke with were how welcome they felt and how comfortable the team made them feel. The high level of organisation, and the genuine warmth from those on the reception team and the facilitators helped to mitigate any concerns about taking part and put people at their ease. This was important for ensuring the event was inclusive and

heard from everyone. All the participants in the post-event survey said they were comfortable to express their views, and only one person disagreed that everyone had their say<sup>3</sup>.

### 3.3.3 Monitoring diversity and inclusion

Stakeholders emphasised the importance of monitoring different quotas (demographic and attitudinal), but also not being a slave to them or being tokenistic. The Sortition approach aims to identify people from a range of backgrounds. Both participants and the evaluators felt that this was the case, and that nobody obvious was missing from the room. People of colour were slightly over-represented in the recruitment quotas, but spread across the 8 tables some people felt this looked a little tokenistic. The team reflected it might have been better to consider a different seating plan or to over-recruit more to ensure all participants felt comfortable.

The team also ran an experiment with postcard reminders to see what impact this would have, although time constraints meant that postcards went out soon after the initial letter and were sent to everyone rather than excluding those who had already responded. The postcard demonstrably did increase the response rate overall, but people who responded after the postcard dropped had similar demographics to those who responded earlier. Details are included in Appendix B below.

Recruitment targets and achieved demographics are outlined in the table below.

**Figure 8: Table of recruitment demographics**

Demographic	Who was most likely to respond?	Target achieved in the room (+/- 3 people)?
Gender	Males were over-represented in the initial responses	Yes
Age	People aged 45-64 were under-represented in initial responses	Yes
Ethnicity	All ethnic groups except White British were over-represented in initial responses	Yes
Disability	People who said they had a disability were over-represented in initial responses	Yes
Qualifications	People with no qualifications were significantly under-represented, while people with Level 4 (degree +) were over-represented	Yes, although slightly skewed towards more educated participants
AI knowledge	People who had never heard of AI or who had heard of it but could not explain it were under-represented in initial responses	People who had never heard of AI were under-represented (only 5 responded and 4 declined after further discussion).
Council area	Liverpool residents were over-represented in initial responses	Yes

<sup>3</sup> 34/52 strongly agreed, 18 agreed "I felt comfortable to express my views in the discussions" and 30/52 strongly agreed, 21 agreed but 1 strongly disagreed "I think everyone in the Assembly has had their say"

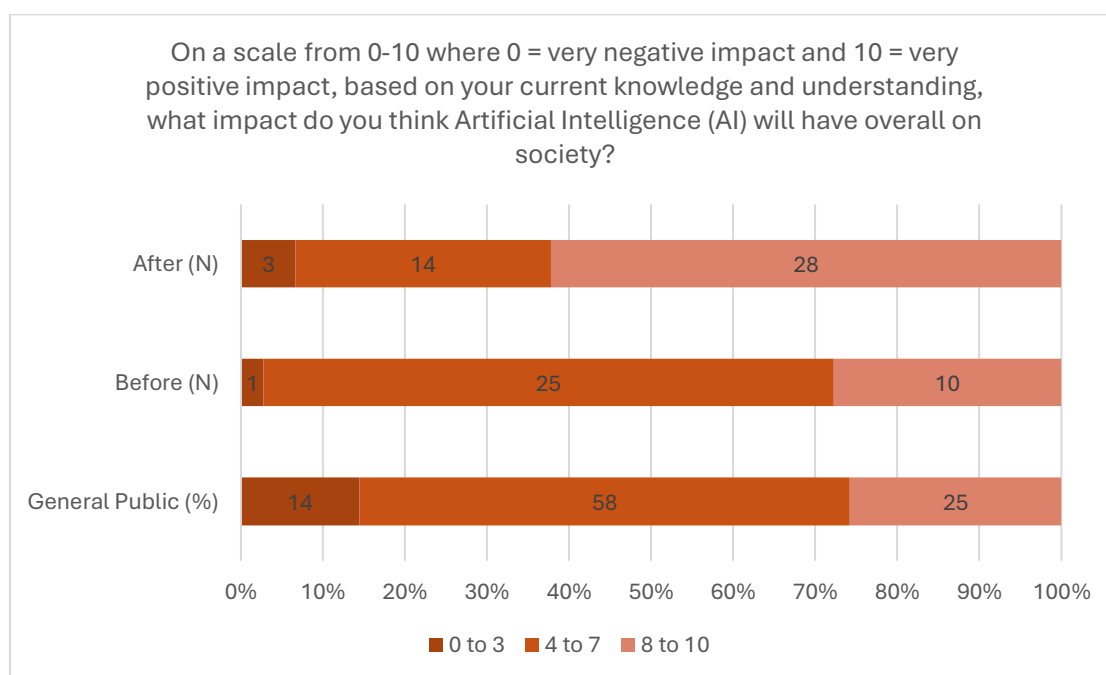


The above table demonstrates that the recruitment approach worked relatively well for achieving a mix of people, especially people with disabilities and people from different ethnic groups. Perhaps unsurprisingly, people with lower levels of education or who knew nothing about AI were less likely to respond initially, or to agree to attend. These voices were brought into the discussions using quotes which shared different perspectives from the lighter touch events the CDC team ran in 2024.

While the Assembly being midweek would have been problematic for some, this worked well for others. Some working age participants had taken annual leave, were currently on maternity/paternity leave, were between jobs or worked at weekends and so were able to attend. Those who spoke with the evaluators generally felt that having Thursday and Friday a week apart worked better than having different days each week might have done.

At the start and end of the Assembly, the evaluator also asked about whether participants thought AI would have a positive or negative impact overall (see Figure 9). This was not used to set quotas. The figure excludes people who said don't know (in line with the general public data, which was taken from the [Public Attitudes to AI survey](#)). In fact, six people said Don't know in the before survey and none said Don't know in the after. Although the Assembly participants were less likely to be negative than the general public in both waves, the comparator survey was from August 2023 so may not be directly comparable. However, it is clear that the majority of Assembly members were more positive by the end of the Assembly.

**Figure 9: Survey findings – attitudes to AI**



### 3.4 Sessions designed to lead to usable charter

Before the Assembly, stakeholders highlighted the importance of having a charter that had sufficient detail to ensure that organisations would know how to interpret the principles. As a result the team decided to produce a 'how to' guide alongside the Charter to help build an understanding of what they meant to participants. In turn, participants were confident that the charter principles were a good reflection of views in the room, and included the issues they thought were important.

### **3.5 Other learning**

#### **3.5.1 Ethics**

One significant challenge faced by the team was the time required to gain ethics approval. As the University had not undertaken an Assembly like this before, it took time to work through the details, and the team had to return twice with further information about the recruitment process, consent, incentives and audio recordings, despite this being standard practice in the sector. An option might have been to describe the event as a public engagement exercise instead of research which would potentially have attracted less scrutiny. The approach did not change significantly as a result of the ethics process, but more was written down.

One thing that was included at the start of each session was the ground rules. However, these focussed on harassment – a term that was not explained in full and as such it felt quite heavy-handed. A lighter touch and more varied reminder of how to work together might have worked better. There were incidents during the sessions where some participants behaved inappropriately, suggesting they did not fully understand or choose to adhere to the ground rules. As outlined below, additional attention to these rules, including for example outlining the role of the facilitators, introducing the idea of audio recording and encouraging respect might have made the sessions easier to run.

#### **3.5.2 Resilience and resource demands**

In the run up to the event the design and delivery were mainly held by two people: one who focussed on the design work and the other who focussed on logistics. Both worked very hard and had the knowledge, skills and experience to design and deliver the planning process well. An unexpected absence tested the resilience of the planning process and overall the team responded well – managing to find a stand-in to cover the onboarding sessions and support the facilitation training. However, if the absence had continued then the team may have had difficulty delivering the Assembly as planned as the success of the event was, at least in part, attributable to the energy and enthusiasm brought by the event chair.

More generally, a stakeholder noted that the set-up and delivery of the Assembly took a lot of time and resources (more than they had anticipated). They reflected that the team had done an excellent job but that there was potentially too much work for two people in the run up to the sessions.

One point raised by a couple of participants was how grand the venue was and how nice the catering was (except the unusual choice of pastries available on the first day). They thought that for an event run with public funds they might have preferred a community centre venue with sandwiches rather than a full cooked lunch. Although they appreciated being treated well, and thought the venue was a nice space to be in, they felt that it was quite extravagant.

#### **3.5.3 Outsourcing some design elements**

The Agenda for Day 2, and the knowledge safari in Day 1 included elements designed and delivered by people outside of the core team. Participants enjoyed these elements and they were valuable learning opportunities. However, the evaluation team observed that:

- ❖ In the knowledge safari some of the materials used small fonts and complex jargon. Also, the room layout meant that not everyone could hear at every station. The speakers took different levels of responsibility for leading the tasks, and the facilitators did not appear to be clear on their roles.
- ❖ Some of the presentations worked better than others. Some slides were very detailed with small fonts that were hard to read. Some participants found the content difficult to follow. It was also unclear what the exact purpose was of each presentation, making it hard to understand how each one fitted with the plan to develop a charter.



- ❖ One presentation was intended to introduce the 5 safes, but did not do so, leaving an information gap that had to be filled on Day 3.
- ❖ Day 2 had been pitched as the opportunity for participants to consider the potential risks of AI, having heard about the opportunities on Day 1. In reality, the session was more balanced, meaning that it did not provide the expected counterpoint. This was addressed through additional content added in Day 3.

Overall, it felt that the ‘outsourced’ elements worked less well in terms of meeting their intended objectives, and would have benefitted from more attention from the core team to ensure that they achieved their planned purpose. Participants really enjoyed the second day and felt that the information provided was particularly accessible. However, the intention for it to balance out the positivity on day one was only partially met as only half the tables spent time thinking about risks and concerns in any depth. Additionally, there was some confusion about what public services were in scope, meaning participants did not necessarily develop useful project ideas for the sponsor organisations.

## 4 Delivery

The framework sets out four themes for the evaluation to explore:

- Time and space to deliberate / learn
- Information provided is balanced / presents different viewpoints
- Participants all feel that they have a voice / are heard
- Adaptability of team in response to feedback
- Participants and stakeholders remain engaged across Assembly duration

Each of these themes is discussed in more detail below.

The delivery of the Assembly included different sessions as outlined in Section 2.1 above. Overall, delivery went as planned and enabled participants to become better informed and to develop a workable Charter which they were pleased with.

**Figure 10: Delivery key learning**

What worked well?	What could be improved?
✓ Excellent chairing and a mix of different session content and styles kept people interested and engaged and ensured everyone was able to have their say	❖ While all of the facilitators worked really hard, following the guide more closely and more effective facilitation might have enabled the groups to get further
✓ Sufficient time allowed for people to learn and become comfortable with the concepts before developing the charter	❖ Having a separate chair (i.e. not also acting as a table facilitator) would have helped support the facilitators
✓ Participants really enjoyed the sessions where they could discuss and debate with each other, reflecting on the information they had heard or engaging in an activity	❖ A more prescriptive and detailed discussion guide might have supported less experienced facilitators to ensure that they covered everything appropriately
✓ Friendly and welcoming team who put the participants at their ease	❖ Sometimes facilitators strayed more into ‘friend’ territory than facilitator mode

#### 4.1 Time and space to deliberate / learn

The process was designed to give people the opportunity to learn and deliberate before developing their own charter. On balance, throughout participants felt that they were given this time, although for some Day 1 was quite content heavy which made it more challenging to absorb the information. Some participants describe the Assembly as “the course”, perhaps as it was being run by the University. All participants felt they had learned something as a result of taking part (see table below).

**Figure 11: Survey findings, knowledge of AI**

Generally speaking, how would you rate your knowledge about AI (after Day 4)						
Answer Choices	1 - Very low	2	3	4	5 - Very high	Response Total
<b>BEFORE you started on this Assembly</b>	35% 18	33% 17	19% 10	4% 2	10% 5	52
<b>By THE END of the Assembly?</b>	0% 0	0% 0	23% 12	60% 31	17% 9	52

Participants started the Assembly with different levels of understanding of data and AI. Some were very familiar and wanted to learn more, while others had very limited or no familiarity. It was consequently difficult to pitch the content appropriately, with some participants wanting to learn more, while others felt they were being left behind. It was good to see participants starting to help each other to learn as the sessions progressed, and in the final interviews several commented that they learned as much from each other as from the speakers. On balance, nearly all participants said they understood almost everything discussed, and all said they had the time and space they needed to think about the issues<sup>4</sup>.

After the first two days, which focussed on learning, we asked participants which bits they remembered most. On day 1 the main takeaway was the specific examples which were given over the course of the day. From day 2 the activities and the main speaker was frequently mentioned as very memorable. Whereas on Day 1 some feedback suggested that the slides could be overly detailed and the speakers tried to say too much in the time, the pacing on Day 2 was seen to be easier to follow.

**Figure 12: What people remembered from days 1 and 2**

	Day 1	Day 2	TOTAL
<b>How AI is used in Public Services / NHS (including specific examples)</b>	10	2	12
<b>Specific speaker</b>	3	8	11
<b>Activities</b>		9	9
<b>General info on AI</b>	3	5	8
<b>Negative impacts (generic)</b>	3	3	6
<b>Future uses of AI</b>	4	2	6

<sup>4</sup> 22/52 strongly agree, 25 agree, 3 neutral (2 disagree/disagree strongly) that “I understood almost everything that was discussed (presented by speakers, said by other Assembly members, included on slides)” and 27/52 strongly agree, 22 agree and 3 neutral “I’ve had the time and space I need to think about the issues”

Environmental impact	1	4	5
Not much / info overload	4	1	5
Need for better data sharing / integration	3	1	4
How AI affects us		3	3
What algorithms are / what data is	1	2	3
General learning	3		3
Data storage	2		2
Bad data / need for good data	2		2
How to control AI		1	1
Health data	1		1
Passion	1		1
New jobs	1		1

In the final survey participants were asked “Based on what you can remember from the sessions (if anything), if someone asked you to explain what AI was, what would you say? There’s no right or wrong answers to this – we’re just interested to see what messages you took away.” The answers were interesting. Around seven out of 31 gave a reasonable definition (e.g. talked about algorithms, machine learning and AI as a tool), while seven gave a high-level definition not demonstrating understanding and four skipped the question. The remaining 12 focussed more on the application of AI and highlighted the positives. Therefore, on balance it appears that some people learned more than others as a result of participating. Despite a certain level of uncertainty, not helped by the rapid developments in AI technology happening all the time, most participants the evaluators spoke with were confident they had sufficient information to develop sound principles in the Charter.

#### 4.2 Information provided is balanced / presents different viewpoints

The event design intentionally led with the positive opportunities on Day 1, with the intention of balancing this with Day 2 content. In reality, Day 2 was relatively balanced (e.g. by asking half the tables to think about harm, and the other half to think about benefits) so did not necessarily counteract the positivity from Day 1, especially as half of the tables had very limited time to talk about any negatives or concerns. Participants noted this although did not necessarily object. They were conscious that they had not heard about the benefits before, and did not realise how AI was currently being used successfully.

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*“To be honest there was a point where it felt like they were telling us more of the positives and less of the negatives. Almost like trying to convince us that its’ good for us...We’ve been able to discuss the negatives in our group but I think the speakers were more positive.” (Participant, Day 1)*

*“People assume a view will be pushed on you. Get your back up on what’s going to happen but obviously it can be very beneficial. I do get the risks to it. But there’s no bias. There’s this is what’s good but also this is what’s bad. It’s very neutral. You can form your own opinion.” (Participant, Day 2)*

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On Day 3, a session was added to bring more balance and also to outline the 5 Safes. This information was well received although by this point many had formed positive views about data and AI, and appeared to be less concerned about the potential risks. In interviews, some suggested it would have been better to hear a balance of risks and benefits each day.

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*“I definitely feel quite well informed on the potential of AI and how good it could be for us. But I think there’s now a lot more optimism in the room than last Thursday. I feel like more could have been spoken about the negatives. We spoke about how we can address it this morning and I’ve enjoyed that coming through.” (Participant, Day 3)*

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By Day 4 participants had heard from a range of viewpoints. Although it was not always clear when speakers were presenting facts, and when they were presenting their own opinions, the main issues were discussed at some point. One potential issue was that not all the facilitators were able to leave their own opinions at the door, with at least one encouraging their table to develop a positive attitude. This might have influenced the opinions of some less confident participants.

The evaluation surveys tracked participant’s views over time where permission was given. Of the 28 who were tracked, three became more negative about the impact AI might have on society, five stayed the same and 14 became more positive, including four who moved up the 10-point scale by 4 or 5 points, suggesting a significant shift in their views. Six participants started with no opinion and at the end their views ranged from one person who was very negative and the rest spread from 5 to 10 on the scale, again suggesting on balance more people became positive as a result of participating.

#### **4.3 Participants all feel that they have a voice / are heard**

Overall, throughout the sessions participants were very positive that they had the chance to have their say and mostly they felt heard. Naturally some participants were quieter than others but they appeared to say more as the days went on and when asked by the evaluators they said they were comfortable that their views were being reflected in the points their group were discussing.

There were some exceptions, especially during the voting exercise on the final day where participants did not necessarily understand how the 80+ principles had been cut down to c.20. Once the voting was complete there was some discussion on tables about the number of “Our Principles” that made it to the top 12 and some frustration voiced on a table which had spent considerable time wordsmithing a set of principles they felt worked well in combination.

This level of competition between tables reflected a strong group dynamic that had been built. However, it also may suggest that people were aiming to vote for the principles they worked on, rather than the ones they felt, on balance, were most important. On reflection, it might have been better to run the voting sooner, while people were less wedded to particular wordings developed by their tables, to ensure the principles were the right ones.

In the sessions run in larger groups (knowledge safari and Banners) some people dropped back and were not engaging. They explained to the evaluators that they were having trouble hearing, or that they felt that their opinions and ideas were being dismissed (for the Banner). While some people really enjoyed these sessions, for others they were not as successful.

#### **4.4 Adaptability of team in response to feedback**

The team actively encouraged and embraced feedback from each other and from the evaluators. Reflective sessions at the end of each day were a valuable place to share experiences and advice on how to manage issues arising in different groups.

The most significant adaption was to change who was on each table in the second week. This was done on the advice of the evaluators, in response to one table that had formed a particularly uncomfortable dynamic, and a sense that overall participants would benefit from being moved around. It was also important as only half the tables on Day 2 had discussed harms in any depth.

The idea was met with some resistance by both facilitators (who were worried about the impact it would have on their group dynamics) and by the participants (some of whom did not want to move). However, the move went ahead. The move changed the dynamics on the tables and most participants shared positive feedback as they felt it meant they put in more effort and took less for granted. A few remained upset by the move, and said it would have been better if they had been warned in advance (which was not possible as the decision was only made after Day 2). In the final round of interviews some participants spontaneously mentioned that they felt that changing tables had been a really positive aspect of the events.

#### **4.5 Participants and stakeholders remain engaged across Assembly duration**

Energy levels were high across nearly all the sessions. At the end, all participants were very positive and all those who completed the final survey (which was distributed to people who attended the debrief session) said they would take part in something like this again. Occasionally people were using mobile phones at tables, or looking disengaged but this was rare.

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*"I would like to thank all the people involved with this project, the backers, the university, the Merseyside councils, the speakers, and educators, but most off all the a big thank you to the brilliant staff that made me want to attend every day, cheers." (Participant)*

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While there was good stakeholder attendance at Day 1, this reduced for the other sessions. It would have been good for participants to see more stakeholders on Day 4 to listen to their charter principles. Instead their feedback was shared at the debrief through a presentation by the event chair.

#### **4.6 Participant privacy protected as agreed**

The ethics approval ensured that the consent form was appropriate and the team were careful to ensure people were aware of the audio recording when it was used. Coloured dots were used to ensure that people who did not want to appear in photographs would not be included in the final outputs. Where verbatim quotes were included they did not include information that could identify individuals.

Some facilitators appeared to be nervous or apologetic about recording discussions. It was not clear why this was the case. Typically events like this are audio recorded as standard to support data capture (potentially as a back-up to note-takers whose role is to capture notes) but in this event audio recording

was only used in a few sessions and participants had the option for the recorder to be turned off if they did not want to appear on the recording.

The theatre of turning on and off the recorder drew attention to the recording and appeared to make other participants more aware of it. Similarly, some facilitators used their phone to record, rather than using digital recorders which is unusual, but in line with normal practice for the team. Others would push the recorder closer to whoever was speaking, drawing more attention to it. In some instances, facilitators completely forgot to record, leaving gaps in the planned data capture.

The more typical approach to recording is to make it clear up front that it is being done, but then leave the recorder on and untouched throughout so that people forget about it and speak more naturally. This minimises the impact on the quality of discussion while ensuring everything important is captured. Note that the evaluators used audio recording with consent and all participants agreed and were comfortable being recorded.

## **4.7 Other learning**

### **4.7.1 Chair doubling as table facilitator**

On balance having a chair who also was a table facilitator worked fine from the participant perspective. However, it meant that the chair was not able to watch other tables and see how they were progressing with tasks, or intervene when the tasks were not being completed as anticipated. There was also less resilience within the team when table facilitators were unavailable. Also, on the final day when rationalising the statements to vote on took longer, the chair's table lost their facilitator for a period and another team member had to step in.

### **4.7.2 Significant variation between table facilitators**

All of the facilitators worked really hard and brought their own personalities, energy and warmth to the discussions. Their understanding of the topic and of the local area was potentially helpful, but also could make it challenging to stay in a facilitator role. The ground rules focussed more on safety and harassment, whereas it might have been helpful to include more basic suggestions on how to behave in a group (such as being respectful and allowing time for people to speak) to make space for the facilitators to do their job more easily.

Some of the table facilitators had less experience than others and there was significant variation in their styles and approach, despite several preparation sessions in the run-up to the Assembly. Sometimes they had difficulties controlling their groups, ensuring everyone could speak and nobody dominated. Some followed the facilitation guide while others asked questions they thought were helpful and did not necessarily allow enough time for the specified tasks. Sometimes this meant that key tasks, such as developing a list of principles by the end of Day 3, were not achieved on all tables.

Typically when facilitating an event like this with multiple tables doing the same tasks (carefully designed to achieve specific goals) the team would all seek to closely follow the guide and focus on delivering the main activities so that participants have the same experiences to draw on. Suggested changes or significant deviations should ideally be discussed in advance rather than implemented on a single table.

**Figure 13: Lessons for facilitators**

Things to be aware of:
The facilitator should encourage conversation <i>between</i> participants rather than engage in bilateral conversations with a single group member. Facilitator talk-time should be kept to a minimum.
The facilitator is there to elicit views not to share their own thoughts (or write them down). They should not express agreement with a particular viewpoint, and should instead invite others to share if they disagree in order to challenge/disrupt the natural tendency of people to agree and give space for people to bring in different viewpoints.
The facilitator's job is to make sure everyone has a chance to have their say (making space to bring in the quieter people). This means they may not always be popular, but they should be respected.
It is important for the group that side conversations are quickly shut down so that the whole group contributes to the main discussion and everyone feels heard.
Ideally table facilitators remain at their table throughout the planned discussions and do not leave tables to self-facilitate.
Facilitators should seek to follow the agreed guide (or agree changes in advance) so that participant experiences are comparable and it is easy to bring the group together at the planned times.

Overall, because people moved tables and because there was a generous amount of time, it is unlikely this had a significant impact on the outputs although it is possible some less confident participants may have spoken more if given the opportunity.



## 5 Impact

Although it is early to measure the full impact, participants and stakeholders were asked to discuss what impact might look like and what the team should seek to measure. They were also asked to think about what the barriers to impact might be, and how they could be overcome. This chapter sets out the emerging evidence relating to impact.

### 5.1 Stakeholders sign charter, attend meetings & demonstrate increased understanding

All three organisations that were involved from the start have signed letters confirming their support for the Charter (see extracts below). They have each specified specific routes through which they intend to start embedding the principles and were all represented at the Charter launch event.

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*“Cheshire & Merseyside ICB will adopt and embed the principles of the Charter when we are working with data and artificial intelligence (AI). We will ensure that we take every opportunity to act upon those principles when creating new data and AI led healthcare innovations.” (NHS Cheshire and Merseyside)*

*“CHIL and our partners will adopt and embed the principles of the Charter when we are working with data and developing artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to advance health, social and economic wellbeing. We will ensure that we take every opportunity to act upon the principles when creating new data-intensive civic and health innovations.” (Civic Health Innovation Labs (CHIL), University of Liverpool)*

*“We commit to embedding and adopting these principles in how we work with data and Artificial Intelligence in the Liverpool City Region. Our initial action will be to embed these into the Information Governance Framework being developed through Office for Public Service Innovation for Liverpool City Region.” (Liverpool City Region Combined Authority)*

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The Steering Committee members continued to attend project meetings throughout the duration of the project and engaged with the principles to ensure that they understood what was being asked and were confident that the principles could be delivered. It was noticeable that while the Committee included very senior stakeholders they did not delegate participation, signalling their commitment to the success of the Charter.

The Charter launch event was also well attended, with 50 participants (the venue capacity) which included a mix of residents and other stakeholders. However, unfortunately there was a very low response to the survey with only 3 people completing it and no volunteers for a further interview.

### 5.2 Assembly members & wider public clear how their input has informed the charter

It was clear in the debrief session that assembly members understood how their participation had led to the final Charter principles. On balance they felt that the work done to tidy up the wording was effective in ensuring as many viewpoints were captured as possible, without losing the key messages they wanted to convey. In the final survey, nearly all the participants were happy with the final set of principles and only one person (out of 31 survey responses) was not happy. This person felt that the



Charter would be unenforceable due to the absence of tangible targets. Another expressed some concerns that it would need training alongside the Charter to ensure it was not a tick-box list of platitudes and aspirations.

After the debrief call, nearly all the participants (29/31) agreed that they understood what would happen next with the charter principles and most (25/31) believed they would have an impact. Only two people did not think that the Charter would make data and AI in the region more trustworthy.

### **5.3 Routes to impact identified (including harnessing participants & keeping them informed)**

The team are still working on developing routes to impact. They have planned a series of outputs and events which are designed to maintain the momentum of the Charter with different audiences including:

- Promoting the Charter at the launch event which had 50 attendees including local organisations, participants from the Assembly and people from central government departments (Cabinet Office, Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government)
- Taking the Banner and Charter to a number of conferences to raise awareness of the work and to inspire other regions and people interested in data to think about what matters
- Designing and delivering learning sessions for local stakeholders (e.g. people based within the three original signatory organisations). The team are also exploring whether there is appetite for the learning sessions to be delivered for other audiences (e.g. data owners in the region).
- Producing a policy briefing in partnership with the Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place (an interdisciplinary research institute focusing on the development of sustainable and inclusive cities and city regions)
- Using the Banner to raise awareness (e.g. application to submit it to an exhibition in the Tate Gallery in Liverpool Docks).

It will be important to monitor these to see what the uptake is like and whether these activities lead to a better understanding of the Charter principles. Specifically it will be helpful to think about the audiences identified in 3.2.1 above, to ensure that each relevant group (including healthcare professionals) is engaged.

Although we do not have data about residents not directly involved, most (27/31) agreed that they would tell other people about the Charter. Their estimates for how many people they had told varied considerably, from just one or two to over 400 (one person had written a blog about it). The median answer was 20 plus people. Taking the numbers literally, participants had told at least 799 people about the Charter, including family, friends and co-workers. This is likely to be an under-estimate as some participants said they had reached at least this many and some said they spoke to 'All their family / friends' without specifying a number. Also, 10,000 households will have received the original invitation so may have some awareness of the work underway.

Originally, there was a plan for the podcast series: "AI & Us: The Future in Our Hands" to promote discussion and debate around the time of the Assembly. This series explores different issues relating to AI and data in the civic realm. There were some delays which meant it launched in early July alongside the Charter instead of in advance and does not explicitly link to the Charter. Nonetheless, it has the potential to bring the message of the need to be more mindful about how data and AI are used to a wider audience.

One opportunity that was considered was to do more on social media while the events were underway: for example, sharing short videos of the speakers in the sessions, or posting questions aligned with those being answered in the room. There was an offer from a partner organisation to promote these

posts and share them widely. However, the team were too busy to implement this – to do so would have required an additional person who could have focussed on this task and this resource was not available.

## **5.4 Other impacts**

### **5.4.1 Impacts for participants**

In addition to the impact of the Charter itself, there were also some impacts of participating in the sessions. Specifically, participants mentioned the following:

- Better understanding of AI and its potential impacts and more confidence using it personally

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*“I learned a lot, gained a broader understanding, enjoyed contributing to the discussions and engaging in the various conversations with others.” (Participant)*

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- Increased trust in AI and how it could be used

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*“Before, I had absolutely no trust in AI as I had demonised it as bad master that will take over the world soon. But the assembly has impacted my confidence and trust in AI positively.” (Participant)*

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- Pride in taking part

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*“I learnt more than i ever could within the 4 days, I’m happy I was chosen and took part, and felt proud with myself.” (Participant)*

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- Opportunity to learn / try something new / challenge self / increased confidence in own abilities

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*“I am so happy to have been picked for this assembly , I have never done anything like this before , and having to give my opinions and thoughts gave me a bit more confidence in myself.” (Participant)*

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- Feeling part of a democratic process / feeling useful / opportunity to have an impact on the wider community

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*“The whole experience was informative and also gave me a chance to produce something that will have an impact on our community.” (Participant)*

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- Enjoyed taking part and hearing other people’s views

One participant described an unintended but very positive impact of attending: they credit it with helping them to get a job working in AI Innovation and have committed to taking the principles in the Charter into their new role.

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*“I currently landed a role as an analyst for a big company, specifically within a technology and AI innovation team. I landed this role as a result of participating in the charter, as it helped me to stand out compared to other candidates. I will definitely use the knowledge, principles, and skills that I picked up on through this assembly in my future work, as this is what local residents/public want to see, and is a model of best practice.” (Participant)*

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Overall the feedback suggests that, although somewhat overwhelming at times for some participants, overall they enjoyed being part of the process and got a lot out of it personally as well as feeling that they had been able to contribute to something bigger.

#### 5.4.2 Impacts for stakeholders

In the stakeholder interviews it was clear that in addition to receiving the Charter for use and consideration, a separate impact which is also worth noting was the opportunity for the different stakeholder organisations to see how Residents Assemblies can be utilised as a tool for meaningful public engagement. It is hoped that the publication of all the materials used, alongside the report and this evaluation will support the future delivery of deliberative events in the region.

A number of the participants said they joined because they wanted to be a part of a democratic process, and left with the sense that was what they had achieved. While some voiced reasonable concerns about how the Charter would be monitored and upheld, which the team must work hard to address, nobody said to the evaluators that they thought the sessions should not have happened or were a waste of their time. The challenge now is to maintain the momentum, both with these participants and by recruiting new ones: finding new ways to give a voice to the residents of the Liverpool City Region on the decisions that will affect them.

### 5.5 Looking to the future

#### 5.5.1 How will a Charter work?

While the idea of developing a Charter has support in theory, there are a number of questions about the practical implications and how it will work in practice which the team need to consider now they know what it includes. Some of the stakeholder questions from before the Charter was developed are included in the table below along with information about how the challenges were mitigated:

**Figure 14: Challenges and mitigation for the Charter**

Challenges	Mitigations
<b>Overall route to impact:</b> How exactly will the Charter lead to change? What can be put in place to ensure it is not a talking shop?	Work was done to ensure that the appropriate organisations were part of the project from early on and were bought into taking forward the Charter in their work. All 3 original organisations have signed and others have already shown an interest in signing.

	It is also worth noting that, by projects following the charter principles, even if the public are not aware, it should increase the likelihood that projects will be designed and delivered in a way that is considered to be trustworthy.
<b>Cultural change:</b> How to ensure that the necessary behaviour and cultural changes will follow from the charter across a range of different organisations? Ideally will need to unlock access to data, ensure safe use of data and ultimately achieve the outcomes that local residents want as a result – what is the way to make this happen and make sure the right incentives are in place?	This was given careful consideration. Alongside the Charter the team plan to develop a ‘How to’ guide to help people understand and use the charter and a self-audit to check it is being used appropriately. The podcast will also be launched to raise awareness and interest in the Charter.
<b>Compliance:</b> How to ensure compliance with the charter among the signatories? Who will enforce it? What can be done about organisations that are working in this space but who are not willing to sign?	The Charter developed makes reference to the need for audit to ensure compliance but it is not clear who will be best placed to take this role. As the CDC funding ends in December 2025 it will fall to the signatories to uphold the Charter. The CDC are developing tools to help with this and are working to embed the principles in existing and planned processes.
<b>Avoiding cherry-picking:</b> How to ensure that organisations do not cherry-pick what they want from the Charter and leave the rest? How to ensure that if the public express strong wishes there is a route for achieving these outcomes?	There was emerging evidence that some organisations might choose to ‘cherry-pick’ from the charter by feeding it into a wider process, rather than adopting all the recommendations in full. All organisations have committed publicly to the Charter and it will be clearer in coming months whether they embed the Principles in full.
<b>Measuring progress:</b> How to measure progress towards the goals set out in the charter – how will success be measured? What tangible impacts will be visible? What are the measures of success?	The charter included some specific actions, such as publishing information about data use which should be easy to measure. Others will be measured by the absence of legal challenge. Some will be less easy to measure.

### 5.5.2 Potential barriers to impact and suggested solutions

Stakeholders also outlined different potential barriers to impact and proposed some solutions for consideration by the team.

**Figure 15: Route to impact**

Barrier	Outcomes
Lack of awareness beyond the 59 participants	- As noted above, there are a lot of planned activities designed to raise awareness beyond the 59 participants.

Lack of perceived legitimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As noted above, nearly all participants were happy with the Charter and felt it was a fair reflection of their views and will be useful advocates.</li> <li>- Unfortunately the survey following the Charter launch had a very low response rate so it is not possible to gauge perceived legitimacy amongst this audience. However, the fact all three organisations were willing to commit to the Charter demonstrates these important local organisations perceive the session to be legitimate.</li> </ul>
Lack of staff buy-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This will need to be addressed at organisation level. The Team have developed tools to support roll-out but it is not yet clear if organisations will find the time and resource to build staff buy-in sufficiently.</li> </ul>
Lack of momentum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Momentum has been maintained to the launch event. There are plans for further activities stretching into the autumn, designed to socialise the Charter and how to deliver on the principles.</li> </ul>
Politics gets in the way (e.g. SDE developments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risk has not materialised yet.</li> </ul>

### 5.5.3 Measuring impact

Participants in the evaluation interviews concluded that if the Charter was successful the impact would be that data and AI use by the signatories would be more trustworthy and beneficial. However, they found it difficult to go into much more detail about what this would look or feel like.

In reality, the Charter might be best measured by what does not occur rather than what does. Specifically, the absence of use of AI and data that give the public cause for concern. It was striking how few people were aware of how local public sector organisations are already collecting and using data and how it is not a top-of-mind issue. Although the Charter may result in greater transparency, if everything goes well then it is likely to stay that way. In turn this could have the benefit of enabling more projects to go ahead (in the absence of public push-back) but note that even one project that runs counter to the principles agreed could undermine trust significantly, unless the repercussions identified are also seen to bite.

The fact that some local organisations (a housing association and a tech company) are also interested in committing to the principles set out in the Charter is valuable. It is unlikely that there will be a process in place to 'police' the signatories, but instead signing up might be considered a pledge to aim to uphold the principles. If these signatory organisations are not necessarily spending their days thinking about data and AI ethics, risks and safeguards then the principles may prove a useful starting point to ensure that they do not miss considerations that the public believe are important.

Some stakeholders were excited by this work and the fact it has been independently evaluated. They were keen to see what they could learn from the approach, as it will be a useful tool for Liverpool City Region to draw on in the future. We hope that this report will be a valuable resource, to be used alongside the CDC's write-up of the events and that an impact of the work will be to encourage more activity in the region.

## 6 Lessons learned

The table brings together the lessons learned which appear earlier in this report:

**Figure 16: Key learning summary**

What worked well?	What are the other learnings
✓ Senior stakeholders were engaged from the start and saw the value of the work	❖ While difficult to arrange in a small team, having more than one person involved in the detail of the design process would have made the approach more resilient
✓ The team were committed to making the sessions a success and had the skills, knowledge and experience to design a suitable process	❖ The evaluator did not attend any speaker briefings, but the way the speakers approached their presentations suggested a more in-depth approach to preparation could have been valuable including locking down slides and speeches in advance
✓ The team gave careful consideration to how to be inclusive and encourage diversity within the design constraints	❖ The agenda for Day 2 was only finalised after Day 1, which made it more challenging for the facilitators to prepare
✓ Outsourcing task of explaining what AI is to a professional who could do this well and in an engaging manner	❖ Exercise closer control over outsourced elements to ensure everyone is very clear on their role and how it fits in the bigger picture / wider structure
✓ Excellent chairing and a mix of different session content and styles kept people interested and engaged and ensured everyone was able to have their say	❖ While all of the facilitators worked really hard, following the guide more closely and more effective facilitation might have enabled the groups to get further
✓ Sufficient time allowed for people to learn and become comfortable with the concepts before developing the charter	❖ Having a separate chair (i.e. not also acting as a table facilitator) would have helped support the facilitators
✓ Participants really enjoyed the sessions where they could discuss and debate with each other, reflecting on the information they had heard or engaging in an activity	❖ A more prescriptive and detailed discussion guide might have supported less experienced facilitators to ensure that they covered everything appropriately
✓ Friendly and welcoming team who put the participants at their ease	❖ Sometimes facilitators strayed more into 'friend' territory than facilitator mode

Overall the Assembly was designed and delivered to a high standard and the team and residents are proud of the Charter they have produced. The learning here is designed to demonstrate that there is always more that can be done to improve, but should not detract from the conclusion that the Resident Assembly was thoughtfully designed and well delivered.

## 7 Conclusions

This report brings together information from a range of sources to evaluate how the Resident Assembly was designed and delivered and the extent to which there is evidence that it will have the desired impact.

Overall, the evidence suggests that the Assembly was designed and delivered to a high standard and with integrity. The team were quick to respond to feedback and to do what they could to make the process balanced and fair. Despite initial concerns due to the duration of the sessions on weekdays, the recruitment process identified participants from a wide range of backgrounds and the uptake was in line with other Sortition processes observed by this evaluator.

Overall, the evaluation has demonstrated that the process ran largely as expected as set out in the Theory of Change. As such, it is therefore reasonable to assume that the main elements are in place to achieve the desired outcomes and impact over time. However, this will be dependent on the team maintaining momentum and following through on each signatory organisation's commitment to embed the Charter principles in their own processes.

There are already signs of impact: both for the individual participants who described personal benefits and also for the stakeholder organisations in terms of building awareness of the benefits of Residents Assemblies and how to deliver them.

The next steps are to share the Charter further, encouraging partners to fully embed the principles in new or existing processes. It will also be important to establish an approach to assurance to ensure the Charter does not sit dusty on a shelf.

It may be valuable to revisit the evaluation in 12 – 18 months' time to see whether there is evidence that the Charter has been embedded and what further learning can be captured about how to build a public engagement process that informs organisational processes.

Many of the participants used the survey to thank the organisers and the delivery team for the Assembly. The following quotes reflect much of the feedback that was received.

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*"There should be more of this type of assembly as the event was extremely worthwhile." (Participant)*

*"I would like to thank all the people involved for organising the whole event, you are all a credit to the city of Liverpool and greater Merseyside." (Participant)*

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## Appendix 1: Evaluation Framework

### 7.1 Design

Domain	Evidence
Clear, well-defined (and balanced) question / scope / framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Desk research:</b> Research tools, expert speakers etc reflect guidance from Advisory group, evidence from ethics approval (if available)</li> <li>• <b>Advisory group feedback:</b> Perception that Assembly has considered range of perspectives, and that scope and framing was appropriate</li> <li>• <b>Participant interviews:</b> At end of process, extent to which participants are clear on the ask and feel it was the 'right' question and extent to which chosen framing (i.e. development of a charter) supported discussion</li> <li>• <b>Stakeholder survey 1:</b> Initial perceptions of process, self-reported knowledge/ confidence in topic so far</li> </ul>
Appropriate stakeholders involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Advisory group meetings:</b> Evidence of consideration given to who was missing</li> <li>• <b>Observation:</b> Review of selected 'evidence' sessions during Assembly, ensuring stakeholders differentiate fact and opinion, are clear and engaging and answer participant questions</li> <li>• <b>Team reflection:</b> Extent to which anyone was missing, whether have right people to gain traction for the findings etc</li> </ul>
Consideration of inclusion & representation in design / recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Desk research:</b> Recruitment considers key demographics (e.g. age, gender, social grade, ethnicity, geographical location) and other characteristics to ensure diversity (e.g. attitudes and behaviours) and consideration given to voices not present</li> <li>• <b>Participant interviews:</b> Extent to which people feel approach was accessible and inclusive (whether they felt everybody had their say, whether they understood the information shared etc)</li> </ul>
Sessions designed to lead to usable charter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stakeholder reflections:</b> level of work needed to 'translate' assembly outputs into action, perception of whether will be possible</li> <li>• <b>Desk research:</b> extent to which Assembly outputs are disseminated</li> </ul>



## 7.2 Delivery

Domain	Evidence
Time and space to deliberate / learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participant Survey:</b> whether felt had the time and space they needed to develop their views, whether felt rushed etc</li> <li>• <b>Observation of events:</b> extent to which facilitators are able to cover planned topics, how they adapt if required (within or between events as appropriate), extent to which participants reflect on new information and build it into their thinking, level of engagement with information provided (e.g. body language during expert speakers, lively Q&amp;A).</li> </ul>
Information provided is balanced / presents different viewpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Desk research:</b> review extent to which research tools, expert speakers etc reflect guidance from advisory group</li> <li>• <b>Stakeholder survey 2:</b> reflections on extent to which different viewpoints have been included</li> <li>• <b>Participant interviews:</b> perception that Assembly has heard from range of perspectives / their questions have been answered</li> </ul>
Participants all feel that they have a voice / are heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participant survey:</b> feedback that feel they have had their say (including minority voices)</li> <li>• <b>Participant interviews:</b> extent to which people feel they are able (comfortable, confident, empowered, supported) to have their say, whether any voices are perceived to be dominating</li> <li>• <b>Observation of events:</b> extent to which all participants are actively engaging / invited to participate</li> </ul>
Adaptability of team in response to feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Desk research:</b> evidence of changes to process as a result of feedback (e.g. from participants requesting additional input or as a result of team reflection)</li> <li>• <b>Participant interviews:</b> extent to which participants feel they have shaped the process (within the necessary parameters)</li> </ul>
Participants and stakeholders remain engaged across Assembly duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Desk research: review of Assembly and stakeholder attrition</b> (CDC to monitor)</li> <li>• <b>Participant interviews:</b> feedback about why people return / their motivations</li> <li>• <b>Stakeholder interviews:</b> level of engagement with process</li> </ul>
Participant privacy protected as agreed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Desk research:</b> materials are clear about whether Assembly members will be identified / how data will be used. Extent to which it is clear that data protection best practice is being followed (e.g.</li> </ul>

	informed consent, being clear how data will be used, stored and destroyed/anonymised)
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### 7.3 Impact

Domain	Evidence
Relevant stakeholders sign charter, attend follow-up mtgs / learning sessions & demonstrate increased understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Desk research:</b> review number of signatories vs what was planned, attendance at follow-up meetings / learning sessions</li> <li>• <b>Team reflections:</b> extent to which stakeholders engaged</li> <li>• <b>Stakeholder reflections:</b> why did/did not sign charter / attend events</li> <li>• <b>Stakeholder survey 2:</b> self-declared change in understanding / knowledge (can also be inferred from reflections on what they learned), self-declared confidence to apply charter</li> </ul>
Assembly members & wider public clear how their input has informed the charter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participant interviews:</b> extent to which participants felt their recommendations were captured in the outputs</li> <li>• <b>Desk research:</b> monitoring data of podcast &amp; public facing resource downloads (note this will not fully capture the outcome, but is an indicator the activity has reached people)</li> </ul>
Routes to impact identified (including harnessing participants & keeping them informed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Team reflection:</b> extent to which team are able to identify relevant parties to receive recommendations</li> <li>• <b>Participant interviews:</b> extent to which participants feel the process closes appropriately and that they can continue to engage on topic (by signposting appropriate channels) and stay informed with how the work is published / used</li> <li>• <b>Advisory group feedback:</b> extent to which stakeholders believe approach has the potential to impact on policy / practice</li> </ul>
Engagement of healthcare professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Desk research:</b> metrics relating to attendance at workshops / learning sessions</li> <li>• <b>Stakeholder Survey 2b:</b> do we want to create a very short feedback survey / is there a way to send this to people who download materials?</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2: Analysis of postcard exercise

In social research surveys, it is common practice to send multiple survey reminders to improve the response rate[1]. One reason for this is to reduce the likelihood of non-response bias. This is important because, in some surveys, people who respond later have been demonstrated to have different backgrounds and opinions to those who respond to the first request[2]. Increasingly, building trust is also important, and providing a reminder (along with a legitimate website to reassure potential participants) could help to ensure that an invitation appears legitimate.

The Sortition approach typically just includes one round of letters, building on the tried and tested approach used to recruit Citizens Juries. The reasons being that mailouts are increasingly expensive, and because the aim is to recruit a qualitative sample rather than a quantitative one, the idea of non-response bias is potentially less important. In qualitative research, findings would only ever be considered 'reflective' of the population not 'representative' and therefore as long as a spread of demographics are achieved, this is typically considered to be sufficient. Nonetheless, the team wanted the Resident Assembly to be as inclusive as possible so piloted sending a reminder postcard to see what happened.

Postcards were expected to increase the response rate, and because they were expensive to send, rather than select addresses at random, postcards were sent to the addresses with the postcodes in areas considered to have a higher level of deprivation. As such, the experiment was not truly random. Equally, due to additional time spent gaining ethics clearance for the Assembly, the mailout was sent relatively late, so there was limited time between the letter and postcard (and the sign up code was kept the same to ensure participants were not confused) so an estimate had to be made about when the postcards arrived.

Figure 17 below shows how many letters and postcards were sent and the number of responses received before and after we believe the postcards arrived.

**Figure 17: Details of mailout**

	Addresses that received postcards	Addresses that did not receive postcards	Total
<b>Number of letters sent initially</b>	7000	14000	21000
<b>Responses received we believe postcards arrived</b>	89	202	291
<b>Number of postcards sent</b>	7000	0	7000
<b>Responses received after postcards arrived</b>	95	137	232
<b>Initial response rate (responses after letter)</b>	1.27%	1.44%	
<b>Final response rate (all responses)</b>	2.63%	2.42%	

According to these figures, the postcards did appear to boost the response rate in the selected postcodes. Specifically, while before the postcards the selected addresses were lagging behind as anticipated (1.27% response rate vs 1.44% in the control), in the final achieved sample the response rate was higher in the postcard group (2.63% vs 2.42%). Whereas the responses dropped off in the

control group, it increased in the postcard group – not only addressing the downward trend but actually leading to more responses than received in response to the first letter.

It is reasonable to conclude therefore that the postcard did increase sign ups and reduced the non-response bias in the sample. It also countered the risk that people from the less deprived parts of the City Region were over-represented in the sample.

Considering this information in numerical terms, the extra 7,000 postcards likely led to approximately 35 more replies<sup>5</sup> (out of 523) for an additional cost of c.£2,700. Given the original mail-out cost to 21,000 was c.£10,700 the additional cost per extra head for the people recruited using the postcards was very high. The people recruited through letters only cost c.£22 per head (mailout costs only), while those recruited through the postcard cost £76 for each extra person recruited (excluding cost of original letter).

With more time available, it would be interesting to repeat the experiment more in line with survey practice which would include leaving longer to respond to the first letter and only sending out the reminder once these start to drop off. This means sending fewer postcards so reduces costs slightly, although with social surveys a much higher response rate might be achieved making this cost saving more worthwhile.

It is also interesting to explore the demographic details of the groups to see if, based on the measures included in the quotas, the postcard responders were different from the letter responders. In each case the differences were relatively small (a couple of percentage points) and therefore not likely to be statistically significant. The data available (comparing the 95 people we assume responded to the postcard against the 428 who responded either before the postcard was sent or who were not sent a postcard) includes:

- Gender: the postcards may have increased the number of men who responded (noting that overall more men than women responded to the letters as well)
- Age: the postcards might have slightly increased the number of older people who responded (noting that people aged 65+ were also more likely to respond to the letters)
- Ethnicity: the postcards might have slightly increased the number of 'Other' responses
- Disability: the postcards had slightly fewer responses from disabled people than the letters
- Education: the postcards may have increased the number of people who responded who had a high level of qualifications (level 4 or above)
- Knowledge about AI: the postcards led to a greater number of people who said they had heard of AI and could give a partial explanation.

Therefore, the postcard does not appear to have significantly impacted on the diversity of the participant pool based on the demographics measured. While it is possible that the pool differed in other ways, we have no evidence for this in this study.

- [1] S. E. MacDonald, C. V. Newburn-Cook, D. Schopflocher, and S. Richter, 'Addressing Nonresponse Bias in Postal Surveys', *Public Health Nursing*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 95–105, 2009, doi: 10.1111/j.1525-1446.2008.00758.x.
- [2] O. J. Bosch, L. Calderwood, and A. Gaia, 'GenPopWeb2: Strategies to improve response rates in probability-based online surveys: A Systematic literature review', National Centre for Research Methods, Southampton, UK, Report, Jan. 2024. Accessed: Jul. 08, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://www.ncrm.ac.uk/research/genpopweb2/reports.php>

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<sup>5</sup> Assuming that the drop in responses observed in the control group was applied to the postcard group (i.e. responses to letters dropped to 0.68 of those received in the first period.  $95 \times 0.68 = 60$  responses might have been expected from the postcard group without the postcard being sent.

